

IV. B. 10. National Natural Landmarks

- a) Background. The National Natural Landmarks Program (NNL) was established on May 18, 1962 by Secretary of the Interior, Stewart Udall, under the authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935 (16 U.S.C. 461-467). Regulations for the NNL Program were initially published in 1980 with revisions scheduled to be released during the fall of 1993.

A National Natural Landmark is a nationally significant natural area that has been designated by the Secretary of the Interior. To be nationally significant, a site must be one of the best examples of a type of biotic community or geologic feature in its physiographic province. Examples of this natural diversity include terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem features, exposures, and landforms that record active geologic processes as well as fossil evidence of biological evolution. The goal of the National Natural Landmarks Program is to identify, recognize, and encourage the protection of sites containing the best examples of geological and ecological components of the nation's landscape.

The determination that a site is one of the best examples of a particular feature in a natural region or physiographic province is based on the primary criteria of illustrativeness and condition of the specific feature; secondary criteria include rarity, diversity, and values for science and education.

The National Park Service contracts with scientists to conduct on-site evaluations of those areas which have been ranked as high priority sites either as a result of theme studies or from outside recommendations. The evaluations gather additional information and comparatively evaluate the site against other similar sites, using the national significance criteria. Completed on-site evaluations are peer-reviewed by other scientists and then by the National Park Service. If a site is deemed qualified and fulfills the requirements for National Natural Landmark status, and if a majority of the private property owners have not indicated their objection to designation, the Director of the National Park Service then nominates the site through the National Park System Advisory Board to the Secretary of the Interior for designation. Once designated, the area is listed on the National Registry of Natural Landmarks.



Garden of the Gods
National Natural Landmark



The National Natural Landmarks Program is not a land taking or withdrawal program; it does not change the ownership of a site and does not dictate activity. The NNL Program recognizes and encourages the voluntary, long-term commitment of public and private owners to protect an area's outstanding values. Owners who voluntarily agree to help protect their landmark property are eligible to receive a certificate and wooden plaque for appropriate indoor presentation or a bronze plaque for outdoor display at the site. Federal agencies should consider the unique properties of Natural Landmarks in assessing the effects of their actions on the environment as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Similarly, in some instances there may be State or local government land use or planning implications associated with the landmark designation.

Proposed Rural Development actions in or near such areas merit special evaluation because of the sensitivity of the resources within them, losses of which could be irretrievable.

b) Governing Regulations.

- (1) National Natural Landmarks Program, 36 CFR 62, Code of Federal Regulations.
- (2) Section 8 of the National Park System General Authorities Act of 1970 (90 Stat. 1940) as amended (16 U.S.C. 1a-5).
- (3) National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 (92 Stat. 3518, 16 U.S.C. 1a-5).
- (4) U.S. Executive Order 11514, Protection and Enhancement of Environmental Quality.
- (5) National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. 4321.
- (6) Title 7, Part 1b and 1c, Code of Federal Regulations, U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Environmental Policy Act.
- (7) Historic Sites Act of 1935

c) Policy. Rural Development should not authorize, fund, or carry out any proposal or project which would adversely affect the unique values and benefits of designated or nominated National Natural Landmarks. Whenever a proposed action is determined to have the potential for impacting a National Natural Landmark, the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, should be consulted as early in the environmental impact analysis process as possible to evaluate the possible consequences of and protection requirements necessary concerning the action.

d) Classification.

- (1) Designated.
- (2) Nominated.



- e) Agency Jurisdiction. Following is the expert agency contact at the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Intermountain Regional Office:

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Intermountain Region
P.O. 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

Contact: Hal Grovert, Superintendent, Colorado Plateau and Rocky Mountain Clusters, (303) 969-2800

http://www.nps.gov/pub_aff/imfa.htm

- f) Location of Resource. The National Park Service maintains a Registry of all National Natural Landmarks. The listing provides information on each landmark's location, natural values, designation date, ownership (federal or non-federal), and owner agreement status.

Following is a current listing of National Natural Landmarks in Colorado, by county:

Clear Creek County:

Summit Lake: 13 miles south-southwest of Idaho Springs. Habitat for a variety of rare alpine-arctic plants, some of which occur only here and at the Arctic Circle.

Douglas County:

Roxborough State Park: 20 miles southwest of Denver. Excellent example of the tilted and faulted sedimentary strata of the Colorado Front Range environment. Contains fine exposures of hogbacks, unusual erosional patterns in Fountain Sandstone, and atypical occurrences of at least two front-range plant communities.

El Paso County:

Garden of the Gods: 10 miles northeast of Pikes Peak. Outstanding illustration of the results of uplifting forces that produced the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains to the west, containing uncommon honey ants, and one of the best Colorado habitats for white-throated swifts, swallows, and canyon wrens.

Fremont County:

Garden Park Fossil Area: One of the oldest and richest sites containing dinosaur, fish, crocodile, turtle, and mammal fossils in the United States.

Indian Springs Trace Fossil Site: Best trace fossil locality in North America for illustrating the markings and movements of ancient animal life.



Hinsdale County:

Slumgullion Earthflow: 2 miles south of Lake City. 700 year-old, 1,000-acre landflow composed of volcanic rock which formed a dam that created Lake San Cristobal. A younger landflow, currently active, is moving as much as 20 feet per year along the path of the earlier flow.

Huerfano County:

Spanish Peaks: 25 miles southwest of Walsenburg. One of the best exposed examples of igneous dikes known. Dikes are formed when molten igneous material is forced into a fracture or fault before becoming solidified. There may be over 500 such dikes in the area.

Jefferson County:

Morrison Fossil Area: Just north of Morrison. First major site for the discovery, in 1877, of giant dinosaur fossil bones in North America. The fossils represent nine species, seven of which were newly discovered.

Las Animas County:

Raton Mesa: 10 miles south of Trinidad. Illustration of a mesa preserved by a thick lava cap which has resisted destruction from weathering and erosion. Only significant reference available illustrating the magnitude of erosion involved in developing the land surface of the Great Plains adjacent to the lower foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

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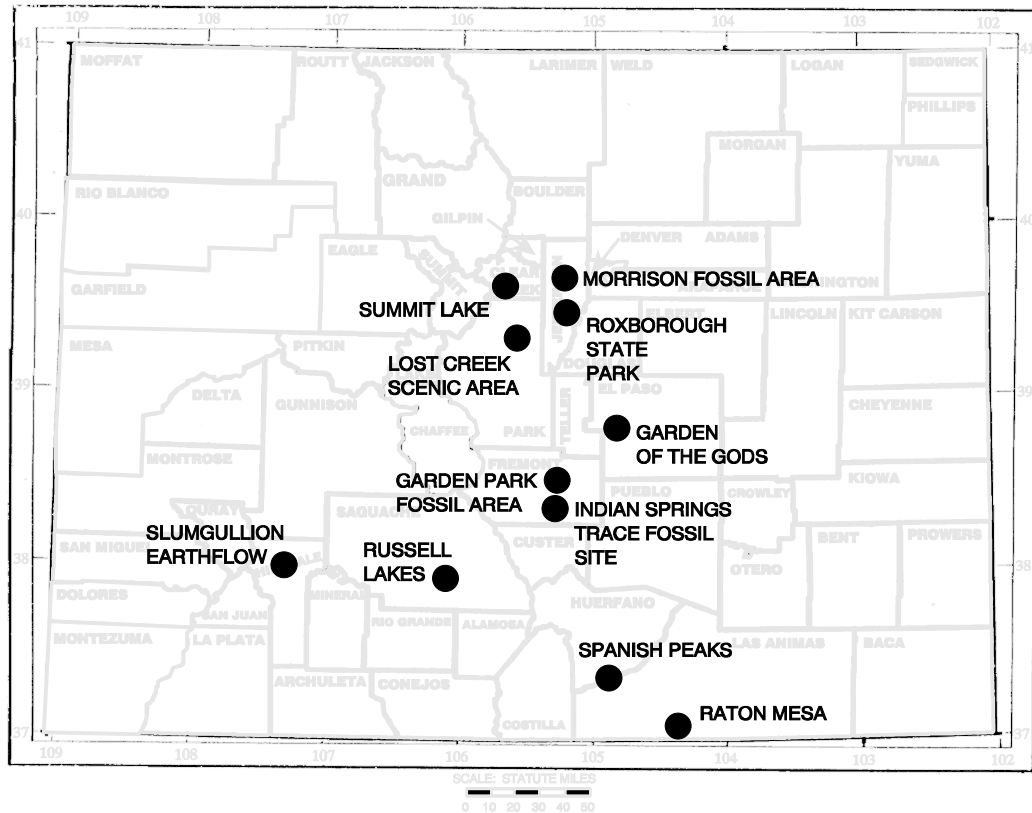
Park County:

Lost Creek Scenic Area: 40 miles southwest of Denver. Illustrates structure of land through weathering along joint planes, containing spires, pinnacles, narrow ridges and steep narrow gorges. Lost Creek disappears and reappears at the surface at least 9 times.

Saguache County:

Russell Lakes: 10 miles south of Saguache. The most extensive bullrush marsh in Colorado. This area contains a number of shallow, largely alkaline lakes and supports large numbers of flora and fauna. The area is also an outstanding resting and breeding habitat for waterfowl.

Following is a general location map for National Natural Landmarks located within Colorado:



g) Other References.

1) Cornell University Law School

"Historic Sites Act of 1935"

(Full text)

<http://www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/>